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ABSTRACT

American and western education textbooks have omitted Hispanic topics, people, and contributions. An examination of seven history of western education texts reveals no mention at all of Hispanics. An examination of 11 history of American education texts, ranging from 400 to 600 pages, reveals that none devotes more than two pages to Hispanics or Hispanic topics. Even though the first university in America was Hispanic and the first school activities were in Hispanic "New Spain" (California, Texas, and Florida), racial prejudice has contributed to brief references that range from the negative to the neutral. The biographies of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Rafael Cordero may serve to recover Hispanic historiography. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1648-1695) was born in Mexico and learned to read at the age of three. As a young woman, she became the official poet of the court of the viceroy of Mexico. She became a nun in 1669 and continued her efforts to pursue an education and to write about secular themes, despite opposition from her superiors. Rafael Cordero y Molina (1790-1868) was a Black educator who contributed to the development of elementary education in Puerto Rico. "Maestro" Cordero was taught to read by his parents because the only school in his area did not admit Blacks. He continued his studies autodidactically and opened a small school for Black and poor White children in 1810. During his 58-year career he never charged his students. An 18-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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RECOVERING THE HISPANIC PAST: HISTORIOGRAPHY IN A VOID

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Purpose of the study

This study attempts to recover the Hispanic past and fill a void in educational historiography. My aim is to point out serious oversights in history of American education texts and to suggest an alternate interpretive viewpoint.

The serious oversight I am referring to is the almost total omission of Hispanic topics, people, or contributions in history of American and western education texts. Historians have underplayed and ignored Hispanic educators and thinkers, perhaps mirroring popular notions about Hispanics. An examination of history of education texts illustrates the point.[1] Seven history of western education texts gave no mention of Hispanics. Out of eleven history of American education texts, each ranging in length from 400 to 600 pages, none devoted more than two pages to Hispanics or Hispanic topics.

History of American Education Books Examined

In the small space devoted to Hispanic topics, there has been an interpretive shift from negative to neutral. In the early years of the twentieth century, Edwin Grant Dexter reported the difficulties that the population of New Mexico had created for the public schools because it was mainly Spanish-speaking people and this had "retarded the progress of public education within the territory."[2]

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[1]Texts consulted see appendix A.
[2]Edwin Grant Dexter, History of Education in the United States, (London: Macmillan, 1906), 143.

At mid century, Freeman Butts and Lawrence Cremin reported the "necessity for educating the American Indian, the Chinese immigrant, and the Mexican immigrant for their places in American life."[3] John Pulliam mentioned the existence of an early Spanish settlement in Florida, but he stated that its influence on American educational theory was slight. He also mentioned schools and colleges for minority groups such as "Negro and Indian," but he mentions nothing in reference to Hispanics.[4] Harry Good lets us know that one of the great achievements of the twentieth century included an "effort to provide equal and not separate education for descendants of the pioneers, the Negro, the Mexican and the Puerto Rican.[5]

More recently, Lawrence Cremin gave some credit to the Spanish (along with the French and the Dutch) for having added to the diversity of American life. But, he also states that "none of these [groups] managed to develop education as extensively as the English."6 In reference to Mexican Americans, he writes of "discordant education." The variable of race played an important part as to which groups were assimilable and which were not. He explained that, "mulattoes and light-skinned Indians of mixed blood were occasionally permitted to 'pass' if they were

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[3]R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of American Culture, (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 22, 333.
[4]John Pulliam, History of Education in America (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill), 1968, 11, 70-71.
[5]Harry G. Good, A History of American Education, (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 594.
[6]Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 22.

culturally similar, while swarthy white immigrants from Mexico were not."[7]

Robert Church and Michael Sedlak refer to Hispanics as being among the "disinherited," noting that they briefly describe ESL and "compensatory" efforts to produce "relevant" curricula.[8] Clarence Karier continues the "problem" theme by citing Lau v. Nichols and notes that bilingualism is an issue.[9]

Warren H. Button, Gerald L. Gutek, and Joel Spring primarily refer to Hispanics' past as a recent social topic in terms of social-linguistic issues.[10]

Is it because Hispanic geographic areas or Hispanic people had no impact on American or Western education that they are so conspicuous by their absence in standard texts? Clearly not. Daniel Levy notes that "the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, the first (1553) functioning university in the Americas, helped establish the dominant pattern for subsequent universities in the region."[11] Even though the first university in America was Hispanic, and the first school activities were in Hispanic

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[7]Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876, (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 245.
[8]Robert Church and Michael W. Sedlak, Education in the United States: An Interpretive History, (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 456-57.
[9]Clarence Karier, The individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas. (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 447.
[10]Warren H. Button, History of Education and Culture in America, (Englewood Cliffs, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1983). Gerald L. Gutek, Education and Schooling in America, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 79. Joel Spring, American Education: An Introduction to Social and Political Aspects, (New York: Longman, 1978), 14, 50.
[11]Daniel C. Levy, Higher Education and the State in Latin America, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 116.

New Spain such as California, Texas, and Florida, these simply are not mentioned in the history of American and western education. Why not?

Thomas Carter postulates that racial national prejudice is part of the answer. He observes, at least referring to Mexican Americans, that "the literature [has] emphasized the differences between the two cultures rather than their similarities."[12] Joan Moore and Harry Pachon report an almost total exclusion (again pertaining to Mexican Americans), observing that "nearly all educators saw the Mexican as an outsider to our society not to be expected to participate in American life."13 She further stated that scholarly and community studies even during the 1970s showed the "nearly total exclusion of Chicano history and experiences from the curriculum of southwestern schools."[14]

The other large Hispanic group in the United States is Puerto Ricans. Historically, American educators have viewed Puerto Rico as an educationally backward island. "We have no higher calling in the world," United States Commissioner of Education William Torrey Harris wrote to Julia Ward Howe in 1901, "than to be missionaries of our idea to those people who have not yet reached the Anglo-Saxon frame of mind."[15] Puerto Rico and

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[12]Thomas P. Carter, Mexican Americans in School: A History of Educational Neglect, (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1970), in Moore, Mexican Americans, 79.
[13]Joan Moore with Harry Pachon, Mexican Americans, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970, repr. 1976), 79.
[14]Ibid, 85.
[15]Harris to Howe (confidential), 22 January 1901, "Outgoing correspondence of the United States Commissioner of Education," Record Group 12, National Archives, Washington D.C.

its citizens, far from having anything important to offer educationally, needed pedagogical missionizing.

Prejudice--generalized to the level of invisibility--is one explanation. Another is that the interpretive norm from the nineteenth century to the present has assumed that it is northern and western European thought and practice which matters. In the United States itself, New England is assumed to be the generative ground of educational importance. It is time for a new lens through which to look at the past.

Opponents of "Eurocentric" history are calling for change. One need not support the more extreme lengths to which advocates of "Afrocentric" or other non-Eurocentric proponents sometimes resort to recognize that we need a new interpretive framework that will look at the ignored Hispanic past and incorporate it as part of historiography in the United States.

Following Thomas Kuhn's analytic model, the issue is to change "the standards governing permissible problems, concepts, and explanations" so that the history of American Education can become more inclusive.[16] My intent is not to generate animosity by accusing past practices, but to generate friendly, constructive dialogue among historians so that in the future they might offer a sense of pride, inclusion, and possible acceptance to many Hispanics.

By introducing the life and struggles of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Rafael Cordero, I am attempting to recover a small

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[16]Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 106.

piece of the Hispanic past. It is time for educational historians to fill the existing void in Hispanic historiography. Although these biographies appear in abbreviated form, this should not diminish their importance. On the contrary, I hope that they stimulate enough interest in historians to entice them to embark on further research.

The first Hispanic figure that I would like to introduce is Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, a seventeenth century woman who is well known throughout Latin America and Spain. Her literary work won her the respect of her contemporaries who called her the Tenth Muse from Mexico. Her struggle to obtain an education and her fight for women's right to an education won her the title of first feminist of Mexico. She is a noteworthy figure that will instill pride in Hispanic students, someone we should include as part of the history of education. She is becoming increasingly well known in the United States, especially since one of her most recent biographers, Octavio Paz, won the Nobel Prize for literature.[17]

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1648-1695)

Juana Ramirez was born in San Miguel de Nepantla, Mexico on 12 November 1648. Both her parents were Spaniards. Her mother Isabel Ramirez was born in Mexico. Her father Pedro de Asuaje was born in northern Spain.[18]

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[17]Octavio Paz, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz o Las Trampas de la Fe, (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica. 1982).
[18]Antonio Alatorre, "Sor Juana y los Hombres", Temas de Historia Mexiquense, (Mexico: El Colegio Mexiquense, 1987), 132. Alatorre points out that we now know the name is not Asbaje but Asuaje.

Juana was three when she learned how to read. Her intense desire to learn impelled her to demand a lesson from her sister's teacher saying that her mother had given orders. The teacher did not believe Juana, but to please her, she gave her a lesson. Seeing Juana's ability to learn, the teacher continued the lessons.[19]

By the time Juana was six or seven, she heard there was a university in Mexico City. She begged her mother to allow her to dress in man's clothes to be able to attend the university. When her mother refused, Juana read the books in her grandfather's library in spite of reprimands and punishments.[20] At age eleven, Juana wrote her first loa (prologue to a play) to the Holy Sacrament, "Loa al Santisimo Sacramento." She entered this loa in a contest at the church of Amecameca and won a book.[21]

She was sent to Mexico City at age eleven. She lived with her aunt Maria Ramirez and her uncle Juan de Mata. Her relatives provided her with a tutor since women were not able to attend the university. The tutor, Martin de Olivas, introduced her to the study of Latin.[22]

At age sixteen, Juana's relatives placed her in the palace where she established a lasting friendship with the viceroy and his wife the Marquesa de Mancera. At the palace, she was able to

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[19]Francisco Monterde, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz Obras Completas, (Mexico: Editorial Porrua, 1985), 830.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Julio Jimenez Rueda, Los Empenos de Una Casa, (Mexico: UNAM, 1940, repr. UNAM, 1964), ix.
[22]Anita Arroyo, Razon y Pasion de Sor Juana, (Mexico: Editorial Porrua, 1971), 19.

continue her reading and writing. She later became the court's official poet.[23]

Juana's biggest love was her books and her studies. The viceroy was amazed at how knowledgeable she was. He arranged to have her examined by forty learned men from the university. These men were from the different faculties such as history, philosophy, theology, etc. The examination was a success. Juana won the respect of those present.[24]

Many of Juana's writings showed her great desire to learn. All her energy went into pursuing her intellectual development. In Mexico, during Colonial times though, women had two choices: "marriage or the convent. A woman alone did not count without the protection of a husband or a cloister."[25]

Juana joined the convent of St. Jerome on 24 February 1669. She chose this life because she had a total "disinclination to marriage." She explained in her autobiography that she didn't want the "expected occupation" of a wife or anything that might have interrupted her reading and studying.[26]

Sor Juana encountered reprimands from her confessor Father Antonio Nunez de Miranda. He disapproved of her secular writing, especially after her writing placed her in the public eye. He thought she should concentrate on a more retiring religious life in the convent.[27] Sor Juana ignored her confessor's instructions

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[23]Ibid., 21.
[24]Alatorre, "Sor Juana", 135.
[25]Arroyo, Razon, 26.
[26]Monterde, Sor Juana, 831.
[27]Alatorre, Sor Juana, 142.

and continued writing. She informed Nunez de Miranda that she no longer needed his spiritual guidance.[28]

Juana's conflicts continued when she criticized a sermon by a prominent Jesuit orator from Portugal. Her boldness angered Antonio Nunez de Miranda and her friend, Bishop Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz.

Bishop Fernandez de Santa Cruz wrote Sor Juana under a pseudonym of Sor Filotea de la Cruz, another nun. He told her to read more books about Christ our Lord.[29] This reprimand caused Juana to write "La Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz," her autobiography and "Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz," in which she expressed her innermost feelings and struggles to educate herself. She narrated her life, her studies, and motivations in her fight to overcome the educational restrictions imposed on women during the seventeenth century. Many women were kept ignorant due to prejudices and lack of places to study and teachers to instruct them.

In 1694 Juana stopped writing and gave up all her possessions. Francisco Zertuche states that her library (4000 books) was confiscated by the Archbishop Francisco de Aguiar y Seijas. Her books were sold and the proceeds were given to the poor.[30] Sor Juana died a year later, 17 April 1695, due to a plague that spread through the convent of St. Jerome.

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[28]Aureliano Tapia Mendez, Autodefensa Espiritual, (Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, 1981), in Alatorre, Sor Juana, 144.
[29]Gerard Flynn, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, (New York: Twayne, 1971), 16.
[30]Francisco Zertuche, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz y la Compania de Jesus, (Monterrey, Nuevo Leon Mexico: Universidad de Nuevo Leon, 1961), 43.

Rafael Cordero y Molina (1790-1868)

The second Hispanic figure that I would like to introduce is a black educator who contributed to the development of elementary education in Puerto Rico. He is Rafael Cordero y Molina, who like Sor Juana, occupies a heretofore unacknowledged place in the history of education.

Rafael Cordero was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in October 1790.[31] His mother Rita Molina and his father Lucas Cordero, both free blacks, taught him how to read. He did not receive any formal schooling. The only school in existence in his area at that time admitted white children only.

He was an avid reader. As soon as he learned how to read he continued his studies autodidactically. He developed enough skills to begin his lifelong career as an elementary school teacher. He dedicated fifty eight years of his life to educating black children.[32] He made cigars to support himself, and he never charged his students for their lessons.

In 1810, Maestro Cordero (as he was called), opened a small school in San German. He realized the need to teach black children. They were denied an education due to their skin color. This was thirty five years before the Puerto Rican government had officially organized elementary school systems. Years later,

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[31]Rafael L. Cortada and Jean Challman, "Cordero y Molina, Rafael" Biographical Dictionary of American Educators, (Westport, Conn., 1978), 312.

[32]Federico Ribes Tovar, 100 Biografias de Puertorriquenos Ilustres, (New York: Plus Ultra Educational, 1973), 83.

Rafael Cordero moved his school to Luna Street in San Juan, Puerto Rico where he continued teaching until his death.[33]

His curriculum consisted of reading, calligraphy, math, and catechism. He not only taught black children, but also white poor children. The children learned to read quickly under his tutelage. His methods attracted rich white children to his school also. Cordero did not turn any rich or poor children away. He accepted black and white children alike. All his students loved him and appreciated his teaching efforts. He was a kind and dedicated teacher.[34]

After many years of teaching, the Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais (a civic organization) wanted to reward him with one hundred pesos. He refused, saying that what he was doing was his vocation (out of dedication). When he was pressed to accept the award, he divided the money among his most needy pupils.[35]

After he had taught without monetary compensation for more than fifty years, the government of Puerto Rico awarded him the title of Maestro Incompleto (incomplete teacher) with a monthly salary of fifteen pesos. Initially he refused, but he finally accepted on the insistence of his friends.

On 5 July 1868, Rafael Cordero died in San Juan, Puerto Rico at the age of seventy eight; five years before slavery had been abolished in Puerto Rico. He is remembered as the pioneer of instruction for the most humble classes of Puerto Rico.[36]

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[33]Ibid, 82.
[34]Ibid.
[35]Ibid, 83
[36]Ibid, 84.

CONCLUSION

In attempting to illustrate the "recoverability" of the Hispanic past, I am not suggesting that "Hispanicness" become the central preoccupation of educational historians. I am also not suggesting that a sufficient response is the addition of a couple of token Hispanics to the list of American educational heroes. Rather, what is needed is a fundamental rethinking of the starting point for framing the history of American education. Does it really make sense to search for the beginnings of American schooling or education only in colonial Massachusetts or Virginia when Hispanic schooling was already taking place on soil which is now the United States before English settlers opened their first grammar school? Floyd Hayes has written that "the central problem in American education ... is a result of a clash of cultures, a conflict of interests and a struggle for power."[37] Recognizing that scholarship is not neutral, educational historians should be among those searching for empowering knowledge. This can happen if we recognize that an Anglocentric preoccupation with New England may not be the best starting point for understanding American educational history. Rich source material awaits our exploration. First, we must recognize that it has value.

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[37]Floyd W. Hayes, "Politics and Education in America's Multicultural Society: An African-American Studies' Response to Allan Bloom, The Journal of Ethnic Studies 17, 2 (Summer 1989): 71.

APPENDIX: A

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